WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for alerting a calling party of a message from a called party via a network comprising a telephone network, a data network, and at least one gateway device connected to both the telephone network and the data network, the method performed by the gateway device comprising:

receiving the message identifying the calling party requesting a call in the voice network to the called party; and

providing the message to the called party via the data network by displaying an instant message containing a notification of the message on a display device visible to the called party.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the telephone network is a public services telephone network.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the telephone network is a wireless telephone network.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein receiving the message comprises:

connecting to an intelligent peripheral device in the telephone network, wherein the intelligent peripheral device is connected to a voice mailbox; and

obtaining, via the intelligent peripheral device, the message from the voice mailbox.

5. The method of claim 1, wherein providing the message to the called party via the data network comprises providing the message to a server in the data network associated with the called party; and the server causing notification of the message to appear on a display device visible to the called party.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein providing the message to the server comprises providing the message using an instant messaging server.

7. A method of receiving voice mail and providing voice mail information to a voice-mailbox owner in which a calling party places a telephone call by transmitting signaling information corresponding to a telephone number, and leaves a voice mail message, the method comprising:

registering the voice mailbox owner using an instant messaging server;

receiving from the calling party the signaling information corresponding to the telephone number;

receiving from the calling party the voice mail message;

storing the voice mail message in a voice mail storage memory;

generating a voice mail alert message corresponding to the voice mail message;

transmitting the voice mail alert message to an instant messaging server; and

causing a user terminal of the voice-mailbox owner to display an instant message indicating that the voice mail message has been received.

8. A method for providing voice mail indication to a user in a system comprising a data network and a telephone network, the method comprising:

receiving via the telephone network a voice mail for the user; and

storing the voice mail in a database accessible by the data network.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

receiving a request from the user for accessing the voice mail.

10. The method of claim 8, further comprising:

receiving a request from the user for manipulating the status of the voice mail.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein manipulating the status of the voice mail further comprises connecting to the telephone network and changing the voice mail status based on the request.

12. A system comprising:

a telephone network for receiving a voice message from a calling party;

a data network for providing indication of the voice message from the calling party; and

a gateway device, connected to both the telephone network and the data network, for receiving, via the telephone network, signaling information representing the voice message from the calling party to a called party and providing the voice message to the called party via the data network.

13. The system of claim 12, wherein the gateway device for providing the indication of a voice message from a calling party comprises means for providing instructions that cause a display device visible to the called party to display and instant message.

14. The system of claim 12, wherein the gateway device for obtaining the calling party information comprises a means for connecting to an intelligent peripheral in the telephone network and obtaining the voice message from the intelligent peripheral.

15. The system of claim 12, wherein the data network for providing the calling party information to the called party comprises a means for causing a display device visible to the called party to display a voice message notification.

16. The system of claim 15, wherein the gateway device for providing the voice message notification to the called party via the data network comprises means for providing the voice message notification to a server in the data network associated with the called party.

17. The system of claim 15, wherein the gateway device for providing the voice message notification to the called party comprises means for providing the voice message notification using an instant messaging server.

18. Apparatus comprising:

a telephone network;

a first transmitter connected to the telephone network;

a data network;

a second transmitter connected to the data network;

a display device;

a gateway connected to both the first transmitter and the second transmitter, said gateway being capable of providing notification of a message to a called party by causing display of an instant message containing the notification of the message on the display device visible to the called party.

19. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the first transmitter is capable of receiving signaling information containing notification of the message from the voice mailbox.

20. The apparatus of claim 18, wherein the second transmitter is capable of providing the message to a server in the data network associated with the called party and the server is capable of causing notification of the message to appear on a display device visible to the called party.

21. The apparatus of claim 20, wherein the server is an instant messaging server.